

The PREFACE.

and others, who are some of the most considerable in their several Professions. But that that yet farther convinces me of the Real esteem that the more serious part of men have of this Society, is, that several Merchants, men who act in earnest (whose Object is meum & tuum, that great Rudder of humane affairs) have adventur'd considerable sums of Money, to put in practice what some of our Members have contriv'd, and have continued stedfast in their good opinions of such Endeavours, when not one of a hundred of the vulgar have believed their undertakings feasible. And it is also fit to be added, that they have one advantage peculiar to themselves, that very many of their number are men of Converse and Traffick; which is a good Omen, that their attempts will bring Philosophy from words to action, seeing the men of Business have had so great a share in their first foundation.

And of this kind I ought not to conceal one particular Generosity, which more nearly concerns my self. It is the munificence of Sir John Cutler, in endowing a Lecture for the promotion of Mechanick Arts, to be governed and directed by This Society. This Bounty I mention for the Honourableness of the thing it self, and for the expectation which I have of the efficacy of the Example; for it cannot now be objected to them, that their Designs will be esteemed frivolous and vain, when they have such a real Testimony of the Approbation of a Man that is such an eminent Ornament of this renowned City, and one, who, by the Variety, and the happy Success, of his negotiations, has given evident proofs, that he is not easie to be deceiv'd. This Gentleman has well observ'd, that the Arts of life have been too long imprison'd in the dark shops of Mechanicks themselves, & there hindred from growth, either by ignorance, or self-interest; and he has bravely freed them from these inconveniences: He hath not only oblig'd Tradesmen, but Trade it self. He has done a work that is worthy of London, and has taught the chief City of Commerce in the world the right way how Commerce is to be improv'd. We have already seen many other great signs of Liberality and a large mind, from the same hand: For by his diligence about the Corporation for the Poor; by his honorable Subscriptions for the rebuilding of St. Paul's; by his chearful Disbursement for the replanting of Ireland, and by many other such publick works, he has shewn by what means he endeavours to establish his Memory; and now by this last gift he has done that, which became one of the wisest Citizens

of

The PREFACE.

of our Nation to accomplish, seeing one of the wisest of our Statesmen, the Lord Verulam, first propounded it.

But to return to my Subject, from a digression, which, I hope, my Reader will pardon me, seeing the Example is so rare that I can make no more such digressions. If these my first Labours shall be any wayes useful to inquiring men, I must attribute the encouragement and promotion of them to a very Reverend and Learned Person, of whom this ought in justice to be said, That there is scarce any one Invention, which this Nation has produc'd in our Age, but it has some way or other been set forward by his assistance. My Reader, I believe, will quickly guess, that it is Dr. Wilkins that I mean. He is indeed a man born for the good of mankind, and for the honour of his Country. In the sweetness of whose behaviour, in the calmness of his mind, in the unbounded goodness of his heart, we have an evident Instance, what the true and the primitive unpassionate Religion was, before it was sowed by particular Factions. In a word, his Zeal has been so constant and effectual in advancing all good and profitable Arts, that as one of the Antient Romans said of Scipio, That he thanked God that he was a Roman; because wherever Scipio had been born, there had been the seat of the Empire of the world: So may I thank God, that Dr. Wilkins was an Englishman, for wherever he had lived, there had been the chief Seat of generous Knowledge and true Philosophy. To the truth of this, there are so many worthy men living that will subscribe, that I am confident, what I have here said, will not be look'd upon, by any ingenious Reader, as a Panegyrick, but only as a real testimony.

By the Advice of this Excellent man I first set upon this Enterprize, yet still came to it with much Reluctancy, because I was to follow the footsteps of so eminent a Person as Dr. Wren, who was the first that attempted any thing of this nature; whose original draughts do now make one of the Ornaments of that great Collection of Rarities in the Kings Closet. This Honor, which his first beginnings of this kind have receiv'd, to be admitted into the most famous place of the world, did not so much incourage, as the hazard of coming after Dr. Wren did affright me; for of him I must affirm, that, since the time of Archimedes, there scarce ever met in one man, in so great